ECLIPSE COMICS®
MIRACLEMAN No. 21
NEIL GAIMAN and
MARK BUCKINGHAM
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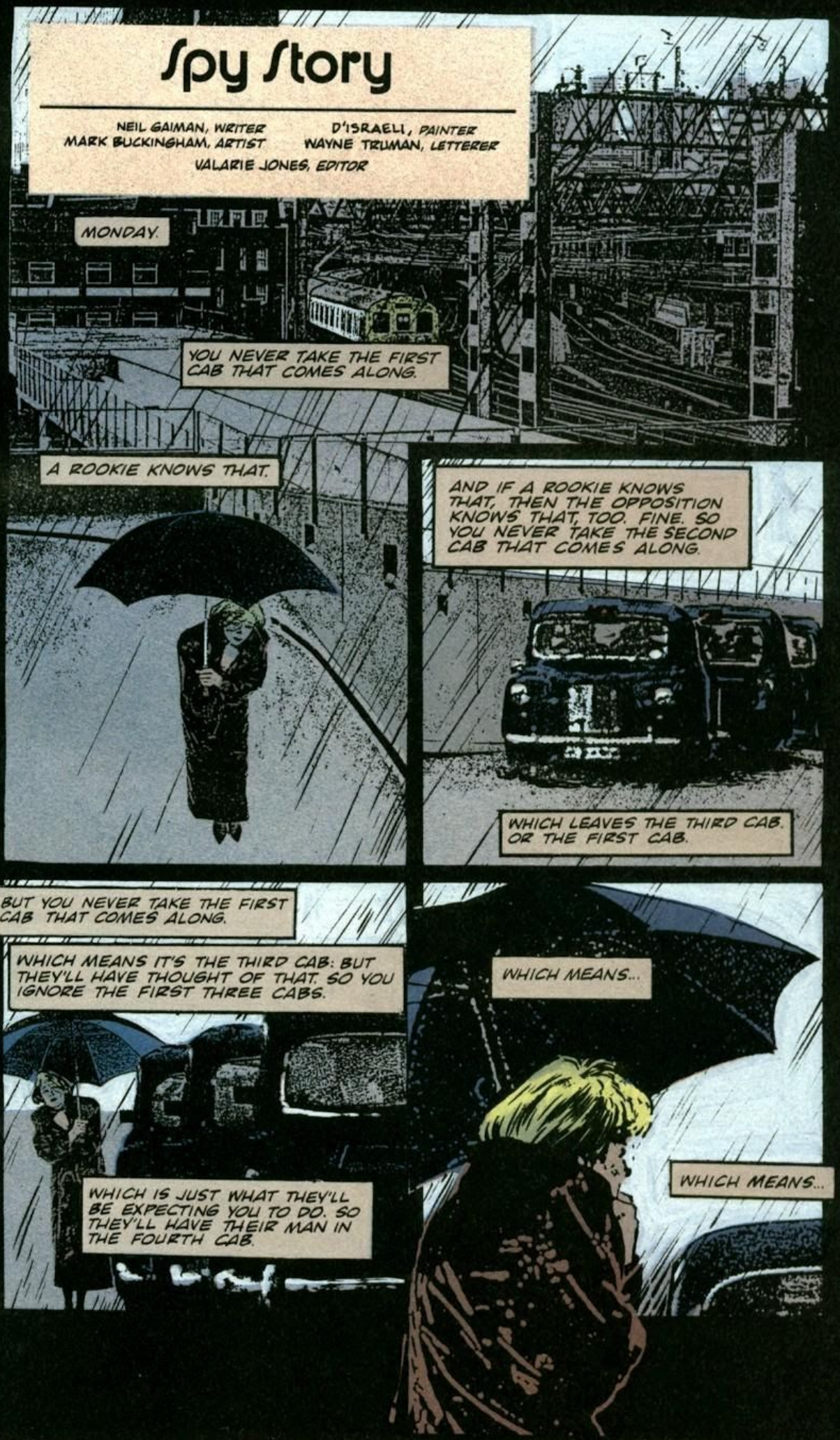
golden


Spy Story
NEIL GAIMAN, WRITER
MARK BUCKINGHAM, ARTIST
D'ISRAELI, PAINTER
WAYNE TRUMAN, LETTERER
VALARIE JONES, EDITOR
MONDAY.
YOU NEVER TAKE THE FIRST CAB THAT COMES ALONG.
A ROOKIE KNOWS THAT.
AND IF A ROOKIE KNOWS THAT, THEN THE OPPOSITION KNOWS THAT, TOO. FINE. SO YOU NEVER TAKE THE SECOND CAB THAT COMES ALONG.
WHICH LEAVES THE THIRD CAB. OR THE FIRST CAB.
BUT YOU NEVER TAKE THE FIRST CAB THAT COMES ALONG.
WHICH MEANS IT'S THE THIRD CAB: BUT THEY'LL HAVE THOUGHT OF THAT. SO YOU IGNORE THE FIRST THREE CABS.
WHICH IS JUST WHAT THEY'LL BE EXPECTING YOU TO DO. SO THEY'LL HAVE THEIR MAN IN THE FOURTH CAB.
WHICH MEANS...
WHICH MEANS...

SPENSER CRESCENT, PLEASE.
RIGHT. HOP IN.

I LOOK OUT THE BACK WINDOW, CHECKING FOR A TAIL. I DON'T KNOW. I THINK I'M IN THE CLEAR.
IF THERE WAS ANYONE AFTER ME, I MUST'VE SHAKEN THEM.

I'VE GOT A MESSAGE FOR YOU. FROM A FRIEND.
RUDNITSKY'S GONE TRIPLE. OUR FRIEND THOUGHT YOU'D WANT TO KNOW THAT.

SHIT.
WHO ARE YOU WITH?

THAT'S FOR ME TO KNOW. HERE YOU GO, LOVE. SPENSER CRESCENT.
THAT'LL BE FOUR CITY DOLLARS.
KEEP THE CHANGE.
I WILL.
AND IF YOU WANT, I'LL GIVE YOU A LIFT ROUND TO THE NORTH CITY HIGH ROAD. I MEAN, THAT'S WHERE YOU'RE REALLY GOING, ISN'T IT?
SMARTASS.
HE'S RIGHT, OF COURSE: I'M HEADING FOR THE HIGH ROAD. THE CIRCUS HAS GOT A CORNER SHOP THERE.
I START LOOKING FOR A CALL-BOX.
IT'S ME. 1860. I'M IN A CALL BOX. THE MEET'S BEEN BLOWN.
CITY PHONE
OH.
WELL?
G FOR GERTIE. 7:15 TONIGHT.
FINE.
CITY PHONE
KEEP THE CITY TIDY
"G". THAT'S THE FISH SHOP ON CARSON STREET. 7:15 MEANS HALF AN HOUR FROM NOW: 4:30.
THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS. WORDS MEAN WHATEVER WE WANT THEM TO.

I WALK DOWN THE HIGH ROAD. THAT TOBACCONIST ON THE CORNER, THERE. THAT'S WHERE WE WERE TO MEET; NOW IT'S BEEN COMPROMISED WE'LL HAVE TO SET UP ANOTHER 'A' MEET.
I REMEMBER IN EAST BERLIN, WHEN KINDERLING WAS BLOWN-- O'SHEA AND I ONLY JUST GOT OUT WITH OUR LIVES...
IT'S MISS BROWNING, ISN'T IT?
HELLO. YES?
MRS FULLER. I LIVE AT NUMBER 21.
OH. OH, OF COURSE. MRS FULLER--SORRY, I WAS MILES AWAY. HOW'S UH...
CYNTHIA? OH, SHE'S FINE. BUT OUR DARREN, HE'S BACK IN THE NORTH CITY GENERAL AGAIN, WITH HIS BACK. WOKE UP LAST TUESDAY, IT WAS STIFF AS A BOARD. HE'S A MARTYR TO HIS BACK, OUR DARREN.
I'M SORRY TO HEAR THAT.
CAN'T BE HELPED. STILL, I'LL TELL HIM YOU WAS ASKING AFTER HIM.
THANK YOU.
RIGHT THEN. I'LL BE OFF. NICE RUNNING INTO YOU.
YES.
OH--MISS BROWNING? I THINK YOU DROPPED THIS...
YES? OH, THANK YOU. HOW SILLY OF ME.
THE ENVELOPE SAFE IN MY POCKET, I WALK DOWN TO THE BUS-STOP. THE COUPLE NECKING ON THE CORNER WORK FOR THE CIRCUS: I WONDER WHO THEY'RE STAKING OUT.
I'M NOT GETTING ANOTHER TAXI. NO WAY. ANYWAY, YOU GET A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF PRIVACY ON A BUS.

HERE IT COMES. I DUNNO. BUSSES, EH? YOU WAIT AROUND FOR HALF AN HOUR, AND THEN THREE COME TOGETHER.
I STARE AT HIM HELPLESSLY. IS THAT A SIGNIFICANT PHRASE? SHOULD I BE COMING BACK WITH A COUNTERSIGN? OR IS HE SIMPLY MAKING CONVERSATION?
I SHRUG.
NORTH-WEST
CITY TRANSPORT
OBVIOUSLY NOT THE RIGHT RESPONSE.
THE PLUMBER STILL DIDN'T COME, I SEE.
I MEAN, WHAT'S THE POINT? IT'LL BE OUT ON VIDEO EVENTUALLY.
RODNEY, DON'T DO THAT. EVERYBODY'S LOOKING.
...SO HE SAYS, IF YOU'RE COMING HOME LOOKING LIKE THAT, YOUNG LADY, YOU'VE GOT ANOTHER THINK COMING. WELL, I SAID TO HIM, I SAID...
WEST CITY. EYES ONLY
PROJECT
CINDERELLA
IT'S THE RUSSIANS. IT'S THE GERMANS. IT'S THE CHINESE. IT'S THE AMERICANS. IT'S THE GODS. IT'S THE BLOODY GODS.
OH OH. A LOONY.
HULLO, LADY. THERE'S PEOPLE FROM VENUS BEAMING SEXY PICTURES INTO MY MIND.
I DON'T SLEEP ANY MORE. NOBODY WILL SPY FOR ME. PEOPLE UPSTAIRS DANCE ALL NIGHT. WHERE ARE THE SNOWS OF BLOODY YESTERYEAR, EH?
I'M SORRY. EXCUSE ME. THIS IS MY STOP.
NO PROBLEM, LADY. GOD LOVES YOU. IT'S ME HE BLOODY LOATHES.

I HATE LOONIES.
WHEN I WAS IN WASHINGTON, BALLARD WENT CRAZY. JUST CRACKED COMPLETELY. ALDERMAN AND I HAD TO ENSURE HIS SILENCE-- SNEAK HIM FROM SAFE HOUSE TO SAFE HOUSE, DRUGGED UP TO THE EYEBALLS, UNTIL WE COULD GET HIM BACK TO THE UK.

FISHMONGE
TURNED OUT LATER HE WAS WORKING FOR MOSSAD, AND THE INTEL SECTOR OF A JAPANESE CONGLOMERATE, AND ALSO REPORTING BACK TO WASHINGTON.
MUST HAVE BEEN THE PRESSURE OF KEEPING ALL THE BALLS IN THE AIR THAT FINALLY PUSHED HIM OUT OF HIS TREE.

YOU'RE A SIGHT FOR SORE EYES, MISS. WHAT CAN I DO FOR YOU TODAY?
SIGN:
I'M LOOKING FOR A NICE PIECE OF HAKE.

SORRY, LOVE. WE'RE ALL OUT OF HAKE. I CAN DO YOU SOME LOVELY MACKERAL.
COUNTERSIGN.
FINAL RESPONSE:
I FANCIED SOMETHING LESS OILY.

AH. I SEE. WELL, STEP BACK HERE, AND LET'S SEE WHAT WE CAN FIND..

DOWN A CORRIDOR, SMELLING OF FISH; INTO A SMALL SITTING ROOM. THE BLINDS ARE DRAWN, AND THE NYMAN SOUNDTRACK TO "THE DRAUGHTSMAN'S CONTRACT" PLAYS SOFTLY IN THE BACKGROUND.

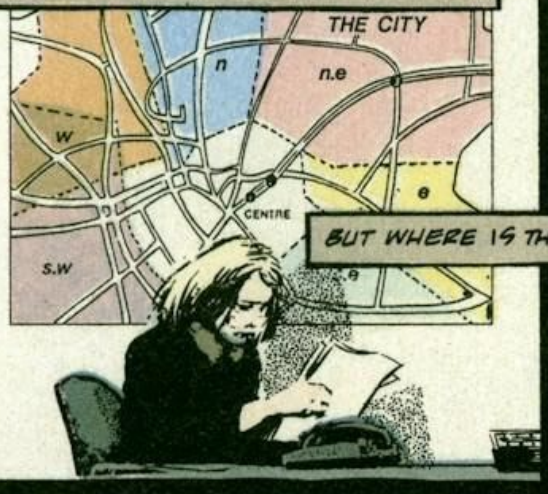
HMM. HELLO, RUTH.
HELLO, SIR.
SIT. PLEASE. SIT.
WELL? HOW DID YOU GET ON?
VERY WELL, SIR. I TURNED UP TO THE PARTY AT 8:30. CHRIS, THE GUY WHO'D INVITED ME ALONG, HE WAS IN THE KITCHEN...
"WE MADE A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF SMALL TALK, AND THEN I WENT INTO THE LOUNGE--THIS WAS, OH, ABOUT 9:00-ISH, AND I DANCED FOR A COUPLE OF HOURS.
"WHEN THE QUARRY ARRIVED, I EDGED GRADUALLY OVER TO HER, AND, ON THE FIRST AVAILABLE PRETEXT, I GOT HER A DRINK FROM THE KITCHEN, AND WE WENT ONTO THE STAIRS AND TALKED.
"I TOLD HER MY COVER STORY--AND OF COURSE, SHE TOLD ME HERS. THEN WE WENT UP TO A BEDROOM, AND NECKED FOR A WHILE."
"AND?"
"I'D DOPED HER DRINK. WHEN SHE PASSED OUT I TOOK THE OPPORTUNITY TO GO THROUGH HER HANDBAG. THE PAPERS WERE THERE."

HERE YOU GO.
EXCELLENT WORK, MY DEAR. EXCELLENT WORK.
THANK YOU, SIR.
MY PLEASURE, 1860.
SIR? THE CAB DRIVER. HE SAID THAT RUDNITSKY'S GONE TRIPLE.
THAT'S JUST WHAT WE WANT THEM TO THINK.
WHO ARE THEY?
THE OPPOSITION, 1860.
WHICH OPPOSITION, THOUGH, SIR? WEST CITY? CITY CENTRE? ONE OF THE OTHERS?
IT'S NEED TO KNOW, 1860. AND YOU DON'T NEED TO KNOW.
NO SIR.
YOU'D BETTER LEAVE NOW.
THERE'S A SHOPPING MALL NEARBY, AND I DUCK IN--UP THE ESCALATOR, INTO ONE DEPARTMENT STORE, THROUGH THE WALKWAY, INTO ANOTHER.
NO-ONE COULD HAVE FOLLOWED ME THROUGH THE CROWDS.
PAY PHONE
YEAH. IT'S ME. CASABLANCA. I JUST HAD A MEETING WITH THE MAN.
NO, HE DOESN'T SUSPECT ANYTHING. I FED HIM THE PAPERS.
SURE. THANKS.
TV & VIDEO dept.
KEEP THE CITY TIDY
THERE. MISSION ACCOMPLISHED. EVERYBODY'S HAPPY.
SO WHY DO I FEEL LIKE SHIT?

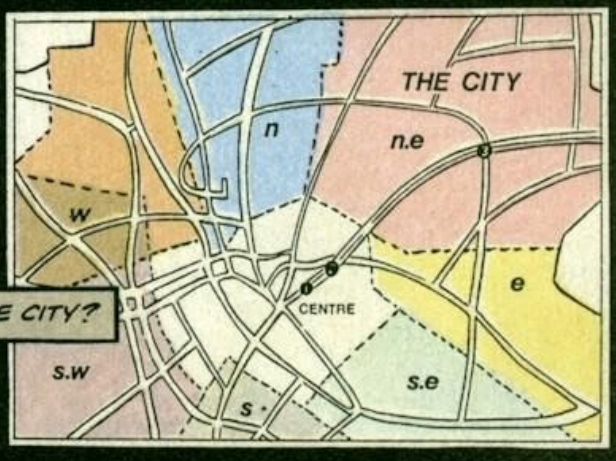
TUESDAY.
ON THE WAY TO WORK I SEE MCALLISTER: HE'S SELLING PAPERS ON THE STREET CORNER. HE USED TO BE MY HEAD OF OPS IN BEIRUT. THAT WAS A LONG TIME AGO, IN A DIFFERENT CITY.
NORTHWEST CITY GAZETTE
SOUTH EASTERN CITY MAYOR RESIGNS
I BUY A PAPER FROM HIM; I OWE HIM THAT MUCH.
DON'T FORGET YOUR CHANGE, LOVE.
NORTHWEST CITY GAZETTE
Classified Advertise
FUNNY, RUNNING INTO HIM HERE. HE DOESN'T APPEAR TO RECOGNIZE ME.
USUAL DULL NEWS OF THE CITY. NOTHING MUCH EVER HAPPENS HERE. NOTHING EVER CHANGES. IT'S TUESDAY, SO I TURN TO PAGE 25.
WEAR A HAPPY FACE IN THE CITY
IT'S THERE, HIDDEN IN THE SMALL ADS. NOT A COMPLEX CIPHER--JUST A SET OF CODE PHRASES TO INDICATE A MEETING POINT, A DROP, OR A PHONE NUMBER.
LAZILY, I SCAN THE OTHER ADS.
DISCOUNT CARPETS
The No. 1 choice for HOME SELECTION
TELEPHONE
600491 day or 674793
Carousel Carpet Centre
Farm Produce
Farm and Garden
TOPSOIL
DO THEY ALSO HIDE MESSAGES? "CHILD'S BLUE PUSHCHAIR FOR SALE. C$12.50 OR NEAREST OFFER." DOES THAT SIGNAL A BREAK-IN? A TREACHERY? A BETRAYAL?
IN TO WORK. MY COVER'S NOT A BAD ONE: I'M A SURVEYOR, ABLE TO WALK THE CITY AS I NEED.
CITY SURVEYORS
I THE CITY. LOVE IT.
THERE'S NO REASON FOR ME TO FEEL SO BAD. BUT I DO.
MAYBE I'M CRACKING UP: I'VE BEEN IN THE FIELD TOO LONG. I WISH I COULD GET A RECALL HOME.
...WHERE IS HOME, ANYWAY?

I DON'T KNOW WHERE THE CITY IS.

I SHAKE MY HEAD TO CLEAR IT. IT'S THE CITY. I MEAN, OF COURSE IT'S THE CITY.

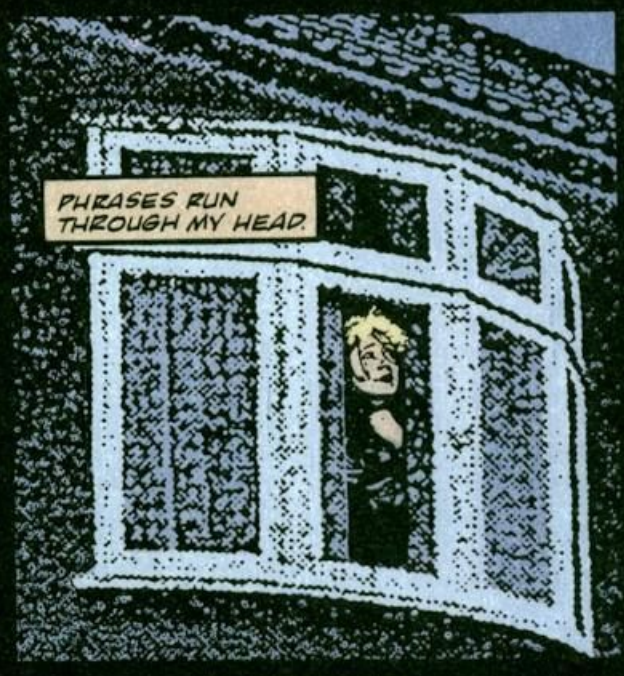


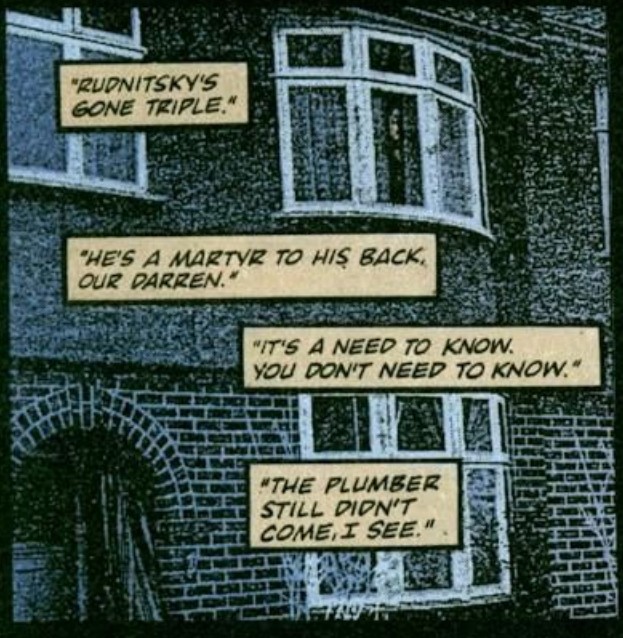
BUT WHERE IS THE CITY?



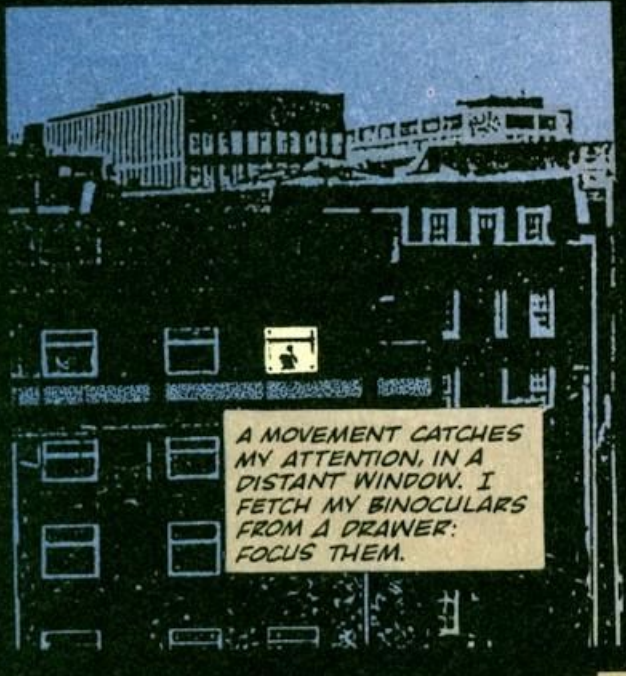
HE SMILES AT ME, AS IF I'M TOUCHED. AS IF I'VE JUST SAID "RAINING DIOCESE PUMPKIN SCRAMBLE", OR SOMESUCH COLLECTION OF NONSENSE.
IT'S THE CITY, RUTH. IT'S WHERE WE LIVE.
...LISTEN, ARE YOU OKAY? MAYBE YOU SHOULD TAKE THE REST OF THE DAY OFF.
YES. MAYBE I SHOULD.
IN
CALL ME TOMORROW. TELL ME HOW YOU'RE DOING.
I'M SORRY ABOUT THIS, HOWARD.
SO HE'S ON THE PHONE. SO WHAT?
NO, NOT HOWARD. HE'S NOT AN AGENT. HE'S A GOOD GUY. HE CARES ABOUT ME. HE HAS MY BEST INTERESTS AT HEART.
HE'S NO SPY.

NIGHT: I STAND AT MY WINDOW, STARING OUT AT THE LIGHTS OF THE CITY. THERE'S A SHAPE THERE, IF ONLY I COULD PLACE IT. SOMETHING I ALMOST UNDERSTAND.


PHRASES RUN THROUGH MY HEAD.


"RUDNITSKY'S GONE TRIPLE."
"HE'S A MARTYR TO HIS BACK, OUR DARREN."
"IT'S A NEED TO KNOW. YOU DON'T NEED TO KNOW."
"THE PLUMBER STILL DIDN'T COME, I SEE."

"SORRY, LOVE. WE'RE OUT OF HAKE. I CAN DO YOU SOME MACKERAL."
"IT'S THE CITY. IT'S WHERE WE LIVE."


A MOVEMENT CATCHES MY ATTENTION, IN A DISTANT WINDOW. I FETCH MY BINOCULARS FROM A DRAWER: FOCUS THEM.

OH, FOR CHRIST'S SAKE. WHY SHOULD IT GET TO ME LIKE THIS? IT'S PROBABLY JUST A PEEPING TOM.

AND WHAT IF I AM UNDER SURVEILLANCE?
I'M USED TO BEING UNDER SURVEILLANCE. I'M AN AGENT: A FIELD OP AND A DAMN GOOD ONE. I SHOULDN'T HAVE JOINED IF I COULDN'T TAKE THE PRESSURE.
LIKE THEY SAY: IF YOU CAN'T STAND THE HEAT...
NO.
NO. THIS IS ALL WRONG. AND I DON'T WANT ANY PART OF IT.
NOT ANY MORE.

HOWARD?
SHIT! RUTH, HOW THE HELL DID YOU GET IN HERE?
TRAINED FOR A LONG TIME, HOWIE. NOW, I WANT YOU TO TELL ME SOMETHING.
LOOK, I KNOW YOU'RE UNDER STRESS. WHY DON'T YOU...
SHUT UP, HOWARD. ARE YOU A SPY?
HUH? RUTH, ARE YOU CRAZY?
I JUST WANT AN ANSWER. YES OR NO.
AND IF IT'S THE WRONG ANSWER I'LL SLIT YOUR FUCKING THROAT.
SO: ARE YOU A SPY?
UHN... NO... I...
I'M A SPY, HOWARD. NOW, HOW ABOUT YOU? I'LL COUNT TO THREE.
ONE...
TWO...

OKAY. YES. YES, I'M AN AGENT. BUT I'M NOT TELLING YOU ANYTHING ELSE...
YOU'VE TOLD ME ENOUGH, HOWARD.
YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND, DO YOU? IT DOESN'T MATTER WHO YOU WORK FOR. WHO YOU'RE SPYING ON, OR REPORTING BACK TO.
ANY MORE THAN IT MATTERS WHO I'VE BEEN WORKING FOR.
YOU'RE REALLY AN AGENT?
FOR CHRIST'S SAKE, HOWARD. I JUST TOLD YOU. YOU REALLY DON'T UNDERSTAND, DO YOU?
WHAT ARE YOU DOING? WHERE ARE YOU GOING?
OUT. AWAY.
THE LIGHTS OF THE CITY CLOSE AROUND ME. I TRY TO HOLD THE ARCHITECTURE OF THE CITY IN MY MIND, TRY TO ENVISION A WAY OUT.
SIRENS SOUND BEHIND ME.
SHIT.

IN THE OLD DAYS SOMETHING LIKE THIS WOULD HAVE THE ADRENALINE FLOODING THROUGH MY BODY. NOT NOW. I JUST RUN, FEELING FAINTLY SICK.
RUNNING THROUGH THE SHADOWS.
CITY POLI
NEARLY THERE.
I'VE GONE AS FAR AS I CAN GO.
I'M ON THE EDGE OF THE CITY. BUT UNTIL TODAY I DON'T THINK IT HAD OCCURRED TO ME THERE WAS AN EDGE TO THE CITY.
DANGER
PRETTY SOON, THEY'LL COME TO TAKE ME BACK. THEY'LL TAKE THE KNOWLEDGE OUT OF MY HEAD, AND SET ME TO SPYING ONCE MORE. BUT RIGHT NOW, I'M SANE AND SAFE INSIDE MY HEAD...

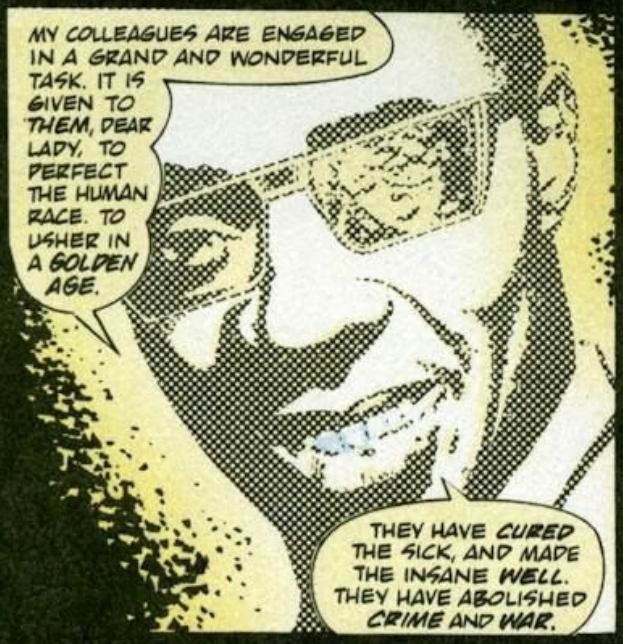
IS THERE ANYBODY OUT THERE? IS THERE ANYBODY LISTENING?
I UNDERSTAND IT. REALLY I DO. I UNDERSTAND IT ALL.
THIS PLACE. THIS CITY. IT'S NOT REALLY A CITY. OR IT IS, BUT THAT'S NOT WHAT IT'S FOR.
IT'S FOR SPIES.
WE'RE SPYING ON ONE ANOTHER. ALL OF US. I DON'T KNOW WHY. BUT I'VE FIGURED THAT OUT. AND YOU'VE MADE US FORGET ABOUT THE REST OF THE WORLD. WHILE WE'RE HERE ALL WE KNOW, ALL WE UNDERSTAND, ALL THAT MATTERS, IS THE CITY.

WELL, I THINK IT'S SICK.
I DON'T WANT TO DO IT ANY MORE.
YOU CAN BRAINWASH ME AGAIN, IF YOU WANT TO. YOU CAN DO WHATEVER YOU WANT TO ME. BUT I DON'T WANT TO BE A PART OF IT.

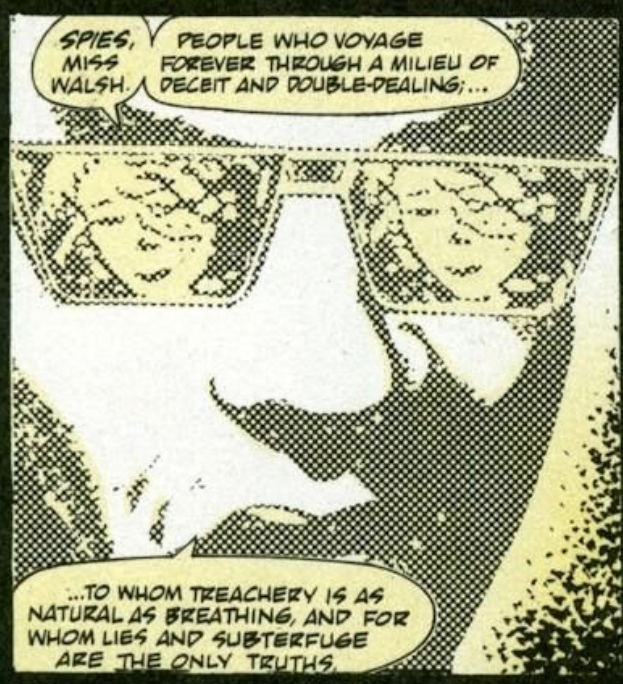
YOU ARE LOOKING AT ME AS IF YOU ARE SEEING A GHOST, DEAR LADY. HA HA HA.
MY NAME IS EVELYN CREAM.

CREAM? FROM THE SPOOKSHOW? BUT YOU'RE DEAD...
INDEED I AM. BUT AS YOU SEE, THAT DOES NOT PREVENT ME HOLDING DOWN A STEADY JOB. HA HA. RECENTLY, IN FACT, I HAVE ALSO GAINED MOBILITY, WHICH IS A BLESSING.

NOW YOU ARE RUTH BROWNING. ALSO KNOWN AS 1860. ALSO KNOW AS CASABLANCA.
BORN SANDRA WALSH--BUT THAT IS NOT A NAME YOU'VE HEARD FOR QUITE SOME TIME, IS IT?
NO.


MY COLLEAGUES ARE ENGAGED IN A GRAND AND WONDERFUL TASK. IT IS GIVEN TO THEM, DEAR LADY, TO PERFECT THE HUMAN RACE. TO USHER IN A GOLDEN AGE.
THEY HAVE CURED THE SICK, AND MADE THE INSANE WELL. THEY HAVE ABOLISHED CRIME AND WAR.

BUT AT EVERY STEP THEY CONFRONT NEW CHALLENGES TO BE OVERCOME, PHILOSOPHICALLY AND ACTUALLY.
FOR EXAMPLE: ONE OF THE HARDEST GROUPS OF PEOPLE TO REHABILITATE ARE MEMBERS OF THE COMMUNITY THAT I WAS ONCE A PART OF--COMMONLY KNOWN, FOR REASONS THAT NOW ESCAPE ME, AS INTELLIGENCE.


SPIES, MISS WALSH.
PEOPLE WHO VOYAGE FOREVER THROUGH A MILIEU OF DECEIT AND DOUBLE-DEALING;...
...TO WHOM TREACHERY IS AS NATURAL AS BREATHING, AND FOR WHOM LIES AND SUBTERFUGE ARE THE ONLY TRUTHS.

MY COLLEAGUES COULDN'T MAKE ANY OF YOU HAPPY, IN THE WORLD OUTSIDE. TREACHERY AND BETRAYAL WERE WOVEN TOO FINELY INTO YOUR LIVES: THEY OFFERED YOU PARADISE, BUT YOU REJECTED IT.
SO WE TOOK YOU OUT OF IT.

WE REMOVED YOU LIKE A MALIGNANT TUMOR.
MY COLLEAGUES BUILT THE CITY; AND ALL OF YOU-- AIDED BY JUDICIOUS PARA-REALITY PROGRAMMING-- BECAME ITS INHABITANTS. AND I, BACK FROM THE DEAD, WAS MADE ITS UNOFFICIAL KING.
ITS NUMBER ONE.
SO WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO NOW? KILL ME?
MY DEAR SANDRA-- IF I MAY CALL YOU SANDRA.
WHAT AN IDEA! NO, NO.
I'D RATHER DIE THAN GO BACK.
YOU SHALL DO NEITHER, GOOD LADY. UNLESS YOU WISH TO.
YOU HAVE UNDERSTOOD THE CITY. OUR LITTLE SPY STORY. AND YOU HAVE DENIED IT. THUS IT HAS NO POWER OVER YOU.
AND YOU MAY LEAVE. IF YOU WANT TO.
I'D LIKE THAT.

I WAS GIVEN THE CHOICE OF LIVING ANYWHERE ON EARTH I WISHED.

I CHOSE BRISTOL, IN THE ENGLISH SOUTH-WEST. I WAS BORN HERE, AND THE CITY HELD PLEASANT MEMORIES FOR ME. IT HAS CHANGED, THOUGH, IN THIS NEW AGE.

IT'S CLEANER, AND THE PEOPLE ARE HAPPIER, LESS RUSHED, MORE PEACEFUL.

BUT...

I'M WORKING AS A LIBRARIAN. IT'S A REWARDING PROFESSION, OBTAINING INFORMATION FOR PEOPLE, LEADING THEM TO THE FICTIONS THEY NEED.

EVEN SO...

I'VE BEGUN A RELATIONSHIP. HER NAME IS IDA, AND WE HAVE NO SECRETS.

I TOLD HER THE STORY OF MY PAST. SHE FINDS IT INTERESTING, BUT NOTHING MORE.

IT'S THE FIRST TIME I'VE EVER BEEN COMFORTABLE SPENDING THE NIGHT WITH ANOTHER...

...UNWORRIED ABOUT ANY SECRETS I MIGHT BLURT OUT IN MY SLEEP.

BUT STILL..

I WATCH THE PEOPLE.

SOMETIMES I FIND MYSELF LISTENING TO THEIR CONVERSATIONS, WONDERING IF THEY ARE TALKING IN OBLIQUE SIGN AND COUNTERSIGN.

...AND THEN THREE COME ALONG, TOGETHER.

I BUY MY FISH FROM THE FISHMONGER, AND WONDER IF HIS PROFESSION IS SIMPLY A FLAWLESSLY MAINTAINED COVER.

THE COMPUTER NETS GIVE OPEN INFORMATION ON ANYTHING I CAN IMAGINE. AND STILL I WONDER WHAT SECRETS ARE HIDDEN THERE.

TAXI

THIS MORNING, I CAUGHT MYSELF NOT GETTING IN THE FIRST TAXI THAT CAME ALONG.

PERHAPS TOMORROW I WILL WAKE BACK IN THE CITY ONCE MORE, BACK IN THE WILD WORLD OF MIRRORS AND NUMBERS AND LIES.

BRISTOL HACKNEY CABS: NO. 1860

TAXI

BUT THAT ISN'T WHAT SCARES ME.

WHAT SCARES ME IS THIS.

IT'S NOT THE WORLD I REMEMBER. MAYBE AT THE EDGE OF THIS WORLD THERE'S A WALL; AND BEYOND IT'S ANOTHER WORLD--EVEN BIGGER, AND MORE REAL.

. 1860

AND ONE DAY I'LL HAVE TO GO OVER THE WALL.

AND THEY'RE WATCHING ME.

RETRIEVAL 5

RETRIEVAL
TO BE CONTINUED

Interlude:

MIRACLEMAN
THANK YOU.
THANK YOU, THAT WAS BEAUTIFUL.
HANG ON A SEC.
YAHOOO!
WHAT WAS THAT FOR?
I'VE BEEN DREAMING ABOUT DOING THIS FOR THE LAST FIVE YEARS! MY FIRST CIGARETTE AFTER SEX!
...DON'T LAUGH.
I WASN'T LAUGHING, JASON. I THINK YOU'RE GREAT.
WELL, I THINK YOU'RE, I DUNNO. ULTRA MAGNIFICENT. I WAS SCARED THE FIRST TIME WOULD BE A DISAPPOINTMENT...
"THAT'S THE THIRD IMPORTANT THING THAT EVER HAPPENED TO ME. I'VE BEEN COUNTING."
SCREAMING
NEIL GAIMAN - WRITER
MARK BUCKINGHAM - ARTIST
ELITTA FELL - LETTERER
SAM PARSONS - COLORIST
FRED BURKE - EDITOR

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I MET HIM. THAT WAS THE FIRST IMPORTANT THING. THE SECOND WAS WHEN I WENT TO THE SEASIDE TO VISIT MY AUNT.
THAT WAS BACK IN '85.
DOES SEX ALWAYS DO THIS? MAKE YOU WANT TO TELL SOMEONE ALL ABOUT YOURSELF?
ALL THE STUFF YOU'VE NEVER TOLD ANYONE? THE PERSONAL STUFF
SOMETIMES.
I NEVER EXPECTED THAT. I WANT YOU TO KNOW EVERYTHING ABOUT ME.
I DID MEET HIM. HONEST.
I MET HIM BEFORE IT ALL STARTED.
"BEFORE THE MIRACLES. BEFORE LONDON. BEFORE..."
S'FUNNY. THE THINGS YOU WORRY ABOUT NEVER HAPPEN...
...IT'S THE THINGS YOU DON'T WORRY ABOUT. THINGS YOU DON'T EVEN THINK ABOUT: THEY'RE WAITING, HIDING IN THE SHADOWS.
BIDING THEIR TIME.
LIKE THE JAPANESE, IN THE LAST WAR. THERE THEY WERE, WORRYING ABOUT WHATEVER THEY WORRIED ABOUT, I DON'T KNOW,
LOSS OF HONOUR,
RICE SHORTAGES,
LOSING,
ALL THAT STUFF.
"THEY DIDN'T WORRY ABOUT THE BOMB, THOUGH.
"THEY DIDN'T WORRY ABOUT THEIR FLESH MELTING FROM THEIR FINGERS, EYES LIQUEFYING IN SOCKETS, GENERATIONS OF CANCER, AND FIRE AND RADIATION SICKNESS..."
WHAT YOU DON'T KNOW.
WHAT YOU DON'T KNOW CAN HURT YOU.

THESE DAYS WE DON'T WORRY ABOUT MUCH.
BATES IS DEAD, AND THE BOMBS HAVE GONE AND THE AGE OF MIRACLES IS HERE.
MU-UM! I'VE MADE PLANS! ME AND GARRY AND DAVE AND SHARON ARE GOING INTO LONDON THIS WEEKEND! I TOL' YOU! I TOL' YOU AGES AGO!
JASON, I TOLD YOU AGES AGO THAT YOU AND STEPHANIE WERE GOING TO STAY WITH YOUR AUNT MILLIE.
YOU KNOW HOW MUCH SHE WANTS TO SEE YOU...
"STEPHANIE: A YEAR YOUNGER THAN ME AND A PAIN. INTERESTS: DURAN DURAN AND/OR A-HA. HOBBIES: DROPPING ME IN IT.
"AUNT MILLIE: SORT OF LIKE A BATTLESHIP WITH A HANDBAG.
"INTERESTS: HOSPITALS AND PORRIDGE. HOBBIES: TALKING ABOUT HOSPITALS AND FEEDING INNOCENT PEOPLE PORRIDGE."
SHE KEPT MY LATE UNCLE EDWIN'S GALLSTONES IN A JAR ON THE MANTELPIECE. HONEST.
FRANKLY, MUM, I'D RATHER DIE IN 'ORRIBLE AGONY!

GARRY WATTS WAS MY BEST FRIEND.
WE'D ALL GO INTO LONDON TOGETHER, HANG AROUND THE WEST END.
SHARON USED TO SHOPLIFT A LOT. SHE WAS DEAD GOOD AT IT. SAID IT WAS A CHALLENGE, LIKE BIG GAME HUNTING. SHE WAS DAVE'S GIRL-FRIEND.
"ME AND GARRY WOULD CHECK OUT THE MARKETS, HUNTING FOR GOOD STUFF. BOOTLEG RECORDS. RARITIES.
"GARRY GOT A COPY OF 'THE MAN WHO SOLD THE WORLD' WITH THE BOWIE-IN-A-DRESS COVER. MUST HAVE BEEN WORTH 100 QUID.
"HE GOT IT FOR THREE POUNDS FIFTY.
"ANYWAY, I GOT SENT TO HAWKING-ON-SEA WITH BLOODY STEPHANIE.
"THE MOST BORING PLACE IN CREATION. I COULD HAVE SCREAMED.
"BREAKFAST WAS PORRIDGE. EIGHT O'CLOCK. FROM NINE UNTIL FOUR WE HAD TO BE OUT OF THE HOUSE. WE HAD TO BE BACK BY FOUR, FOR TEA.
"THEY'D ALL BE THERE. I COULD NEVER REMEMBER THEIR NAMES.
"RIPPING INTO THEIR OATMEAL BISCUITS LIKE SEAGULLS PICKING APART A DEAD SEAL.
HASN'T HE GROWN?
DOESN'T HE LOOK LIKE HIS DAD?
YOU REMEMBER ME, LOVE?
DOESN'T HE LOOK LIKE HIS MOTHER?
I NEVER CARED FOR THAT SIDE OF THE FAMILY.
HASN'T HE GROWN?

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"THEY'D GO **ON** AND **ON** AND **ON** ABOUT WHOEVER WAS IN HOSPITAL THAT WEEK WITH HER LEG OR INSIDES.

"THEY'D MAKE A FUSS OF STEPHANIE, AND THEY'D IGNORE ME.

"AND STEPHANIE MADE FRIENDS WITH THE GIRL NEXT DOOR, SO THEY'D GO OFF AND TALK ABOUT SIMON LE BON, AND I'D BE LEFT TO ENJOY MYSELF ON THE SEAFRONT.

"YOU COULDN'T **DO** MUCH.

"THERE WAS AN OLD PIER THAT WAS CLOSED OFF. UNDER RECONSTRUCTION.

"IT HAD BEEN UNDER RECONSTRUCTION SINCE 1973.

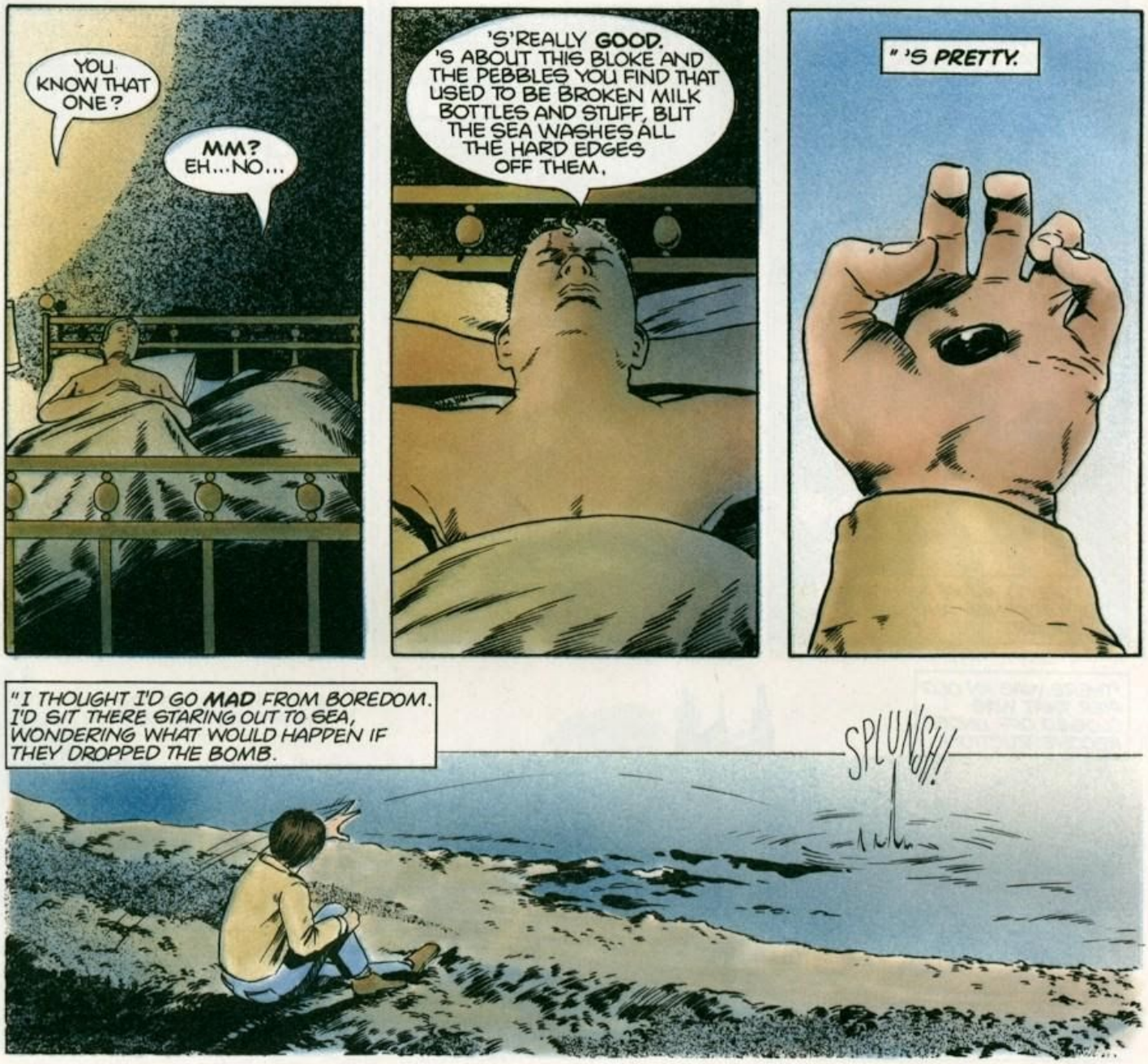
"THERE WERE HORRIBLE GIFT SHOPS.

KISS·ME·QUICK

"THEY SOLD SWEETS THAT LOOKED LIKE PEBBLES, **KISS-ME-QUICK** HATS, AND STICKS OF ROCK WITH **'HAWKING-ON-SEA'** THROUGH THE MIDDLE.

"THE SKIES WERE GREY AND TIRED, AND THE SEA WAS A MUDDY BROWN, AND THE BEACHES WERE JUST PEBBLES.

"I'D WALK UP AND DOWN THEM, LISTENING TO THE SCREAMS OF THE SEAGULLS AND LOOKING FOR DRIFTGLASS, LIKE IN THE DELANEY STORY."


YOU KNOW THAT ONE?
MM? EH...NO...
'S'REALLY GOOD. 'S ABOUT THIS BLOKE AND THE PEBBLES YOU FIND THAT USED TO BE BROKEN MILK BOTTLES AND STUFF, BUT THE SEA WASHES ALL THE HARD EDGES OFF THEM.
" 'S PRETTY.
"I THOUGHT I'D GO MAD FROM BOREDOM. I'D SIT THERE STARING OUT TO SEA, WONDERING WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF THEY DROPPED THE BOMB.
SPLUNSH!
"IMAGINING THE SEA BOILING, THE ICE-CREAMS MELTING IN THEIR CONES, THE POSTCARDS GOING BLACK AND CHARRING...
CLOSED
Walls
"IMAGINING ALL THE SMUTTY JOKES AND PICTURES OF THE PIER RISING INTO THE SKY IN A TOWER OF BLACK ASH AND WHITE ASH...
WOULD YOU LIKE A SCREW DRIVER?
BAMFOH POSTCARD
WOULD YOU LIKE A SCREW DRIVER?
WE COULD BOTH DO WITH A BIT
TONIGHT'S SPEAKER SUBJECT SPIRITUAL UPLIFT
"I SENT A POSTCARD TO GARRY. IT SAID, 'HAVING A HORRIBLE TIME, WISH I WAS THERE WITH YOU.
"OF COURSE HE NEVER GOT IT.
0·20
"BATES GOT HIM FIRST."

WHERE WERE YOU WHEN LONDON HAPPENED?
HNH? IN NEPAL, OF COURSE.
OH. YEAH. I SHOULD HAVE THOUGHT. SORRY.
I OUGHT TO HAVE BEEN IN LONDON. I OUGHT TO HAVE BEEN WITH THEM.
I WONDER WHAT IT WAS LIKE...
...THEY NEVER IDENTIFIED SHARON AND DAVE. I THINK ABOUT THEM.
THEY COULD HAVE BEEN PART OF THE MESS IN OXFORD STREET. YOU KNOW. ALL THE BITS.
WHEN HE WAS JUST DRAGGING PEOPLE UP IN THE SKY AND DROPPING THEM.
"MAYBE THEIR GUTS FORMED PART OF THE ROPE HE MADE AROUND CENTRE POINT. MAYBE.
"I DUNNO."
I KNOW WHAT HAPPENED TO GARRY, THOUGH.
YOU SAW THE KUBRICK MOVIE, 'VENEER'? WITH ALL THE DOCUMENTARY FOOTAGE?
MM.
"THERE'S A SCENE IN THAT, JUST AFTER THE CHESSBOARD OF BREASTS, WHEN YOU SEE THIS YOUNG GUY.
"AND HE'S BEEN CUT DOWN THE MIDDLE, AND HIS INSIDES HAVE BEEN RIPPED OUT...

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"AND HE'S BEEN STUCK ON THE WEATHER VANE ON THE TOP OF A CHURCH WITH HIS MOUTH WIDE OPEN.
POPCORN
"AND EVERY TIME THE WIND BLOWS IT GOES THROUGH HIM AND IT SOUNDS LIKE HE'S SCREAMING, BUT IT'S JUST THE WIND RATTLING THROUGH HIS VOICEBOX..."
THAT WAS GARRY.
HE USED TO CALL ME ANNIE, WHEN WE WERE YOUNGER. 'CAUSE OF MY NAME. JASON OAKEY. ANNIE OAKLEY.
"AND I WAS TWO HUNDRED MILES AWAY, LISTENING TO THE SEAGULLS, THINKING ABOUT WHAT A GREAT TIME THEY MUST HAVE BEEN HAVING.
"I POSTED GARRY'S CARD. WHEN I GOT BACK AUNT MILLIE SAID:
THERE'S BEEN SOME TROUBLE IN LONDON.
"SHE SAID SHE THOUGHT IT WAS THE RUSSIANS. THERE WAS A NEWSFLASH ON RADIO 2, AND THEN IT WENT DEAD.
"THE LOCAL STATIONS WERE STILL BROADCASTING, BUT THEY DIDN'T KNOW WHAT WAS GOING ON EITHER.
"I WENT UP TO MY ROOM."

AND I THOUGHT ABOUT THE **FIRST** IMPORTANT THING THAT EVER HAPPENED TO ME.
I'VE NEVER TOLD **ANYONE** THIS. BEFORE LONDON, I THOUGHT MAYBE I'D **IMAGINED** IT.
AFTER LONDON... I THOUGHT OTHER PEOPLE WOULD THINK I'D MADE IT UP... TO BE **IMPORTANT.**
"I WAS NINE OR TEN.
"I HAD THIS PLACE IN EPPING FOREST. IN A HOLLOW TREE. **DON'T** LAUGH. IT WAS MY BOMB SHELTER...
"IN CASE OF NUCLEAR WAR. I HAD HALF A PACKET OF TOFFOS, A PEA SHOOTER, A COPY OF **FIESTA**. SOME FAGS.
"AND I WENT DOWN THERE ONE NIGHT AND I **SAW** HIM. ALL **GLITTERY** AND **SHINY.** AND I SPOKE TO HIM.
"AND I SAID TO HIM, **PROVE** TO ME YOU'RE A SUPER-HERO, SO HE **WAVES** AT THIS ROCK AND...
"WHOOMF!
"IT EXPLODES.
"AND I--I CAN'T **BELIEVE** I DID THIS --I ASKED IF **I** COULD BE HIS BOY PARTNER.
"...KID MIRACLEMAN... ...**CHRIST.**
"HE SAID **NO.** MAYBE HE **KNEW** WHAT WAS GOING TO HAPPEN.
"AND I SAID, IF THERE **WAS** A NUCLEAR WAR, WOULD HE **SAVE** ME?
"HE SAID, NO PROMISES, BUT HE'D **TRY.** IF HE **COULD.** AND WE SHAKE HANDS AND HE FLIES OFF INTO THE SKY."
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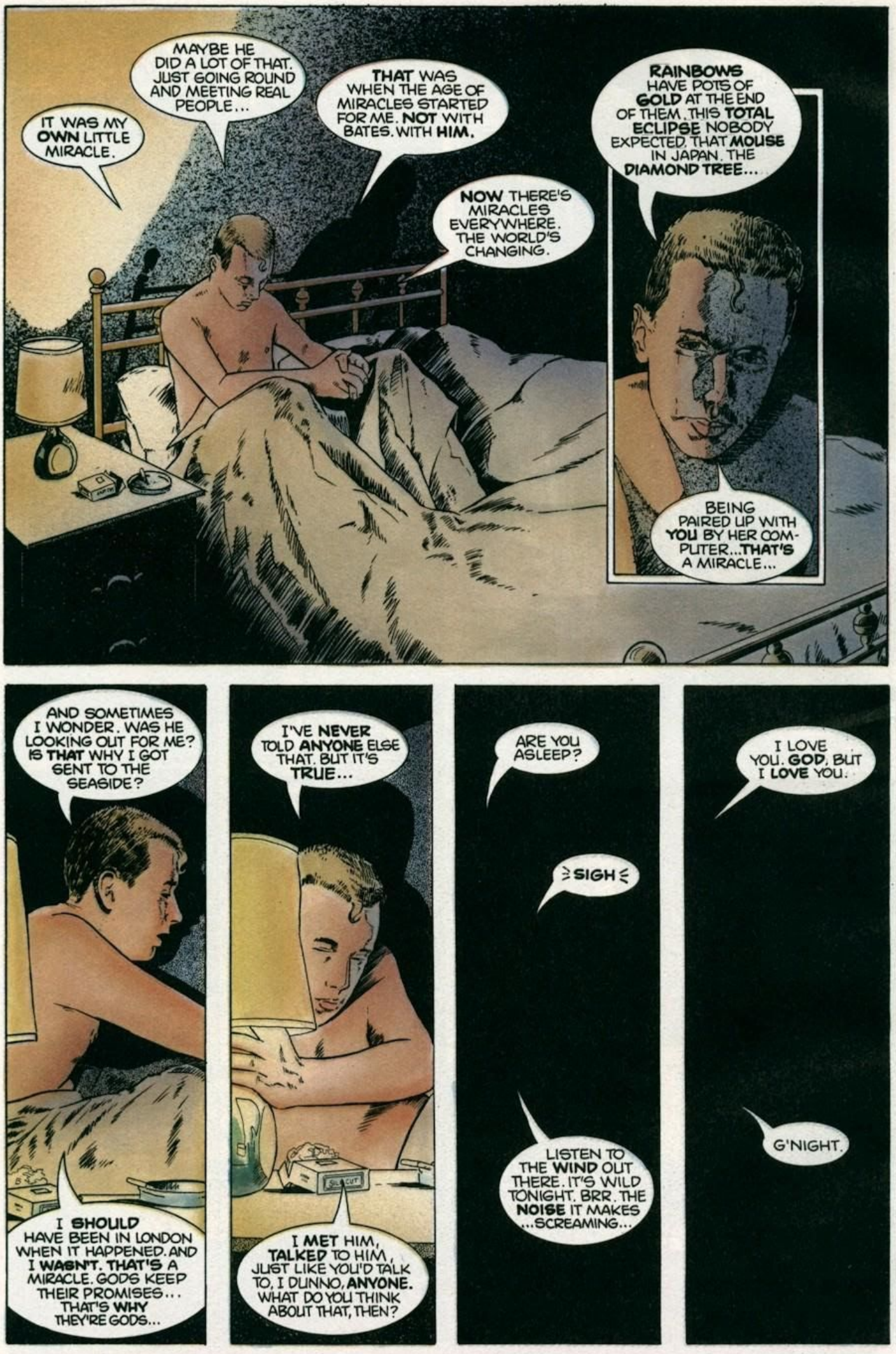
IT WAS MY OWN LITTLE MIRACLE.
MAYBE HE DID A LOT OF THAT. JUST GOING ROUND AND MEETING REAL PEOPLE...
THAT WAS WHEN THE AGE OF MIRACLES STARTED FOR ME. NOT WITH BATES. WITH HIM.
NOW THERE'S MIRACLES EVERYWHERE. THE WORLD'S CHANGING.
RAINBOWS HAVE POTS OF GOLD AT THE END OF THEM. THIS TOTAL ECLIPSE NOBODY EXPECTED. THAT MOUSE IN JAPAN. THE DIAMOND TREE...
BEING PAIRED UP WITH YOU BY HER COMPUTER...THAT'S A MIRACLE...
AND SOMETIMES I WONDER. WAS HE LOOKING OUT FOR ME? IS THAT WHY I GOT SENT TO THE SEASIDE?
I SHOULD HAVE BEEN IN LONDON WHEN IT HAPPENED. AND I WASN'T. THAT'S A MIRACLE. GODS KEEP THEIR PROMISES... THAT'S WHY THEY'RE GODS...
I'VE NEVER TOLD ANYONE ELSE THAT. BUT IT'S TRUE...
I MET HIM, TALKED TO HIM, JUST LIKE YOU'D TALK TO, I DUNNO, ANYONE. WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT THAT, THEN?
ARE YOU ASLEEP?
≥SIGH≤
LISTEN TO THE WIND OUT THERE. IT'S WILD TONIGHT. BRR. THE NOISE IT MAKES ...SCREAMING...
I LOVE YOU. GOD, BUT I LOVE YOU.
G'NIGHT.